

HAVING overcome the challenge of Merthyr Tydfil a fortnight ago, Wycombe Wanderers face a far more difficult hurdle tomorrow (Saturday) when they travel to Waterlooville in the first round of the FA Cup (writes Stuart Earp).

Wycombe were one of the first draws out of the hat at Lancaster Gate on Monday and apart from the disappointment of missing out on a home tie, the club can't have been too pleased to meet a Waterlooville side that is right bang in form.

Before Wednesday's 3-2 defeat at home to Trowbridge, the Hampshire club had lost only two games this season, both against Weymouth in the Southern League Cup and now have a record of played eight, won four, drawn three and lost one in Division One South of the Southern League.

But it is Waterlooville's FA Cup performances that must be worrying Wycombe followers. In the last round they beat Wanderers' fellow Rothmans Isthmian Leaguers Hendon 4-1, although two of their goals came late in the game. In the other qualifying round they hammered nine goals past Hants League side Cowes and then beat Swaysling 3-0 at home followed by a 2-1 win at Basingstoke.

Wycombe will face a partisan 3,000 plus crowd and a team beaten only once on their own ground this season, for this game which is only the second time Waterlooville have reached the first round.

Chief danger from Wycombe's point of view are Waterlooville's front three and the whole outcome of the game could hinge on the battle between the home forwards and the Wanderers back four. There's not much doubt that the Blues defence has been the strongest part of the team in recent games, particular-



ly centre backs Alan Phillips and Keith Mead.

The back four faces the threat of a forward line that has scored 27 goals in 17 games. Mick Bennett leads the stakes with 10, while Kim Mans has nine. But the star at Waterlooville is central striker John Robson. He has six goals to his credit from six games including a hat-trick against Hendon in the last round.

Robson, 28, a former REME corporal and the Combined Services centre forward for many seasons, turned down a contract with Scottish First Division Club St Johnstone at the start of the season.

Robson had a month's trial at St Johnstone and his first game in professional football was at Ibrox Park against champions Rangers.

DEFENCE

Goalkeeper — Richard Damerell: Aged 25, former amateur with Southampton and local player who lost his place last season through lack of form. But now playing with old confidence. Member of the Premier Division team.

Right back — Bobby Gill: Aged 28. Joined club in 1974 from Andover but has only really found his form this season.

Centre back — Alan Avery: Aged 30. Another member of the Premier Division side who joined the club nine years ago. A tall capable defender who masterminds the defence.

Centre back — John Kill: Aged 28. Like Avery, a member of the promotion team. Broke his leg last season but has made a fine comeback.

Left back — Alan Stones: Aged 22. Been a regular since winning promotion. Tenacious tackler.

MIDFIELD

Mick Seymour: Aged 22. Ex-Southampton player in his second season with Waterlooville and playing better than ever.

Brian Bromley: Aged 30. Signed this season but began his career with Bolton, making more than 100 appearances in the

First Division side. A schemer with great passing ability.

Ken Finlay: Aged 23. A local player signed in the close season whose enthusiasm and energy have added a lot to midfield.

Trevor Williams: Aged 29. Joined club last year after several seasons with Hitchin Town but has 17 Welsh Amateur caps.

FORWARDS

Kim Mann: Aged 23. Returned to Waterlooville three years ago after a spell with Portsmouth. Fast and skilful winger, possibly the trickiest member of the side.

John Robson: Aged 28. Signed last year when he left the Army. Has scored five goals in his last three league games. Deadly in the air.

Mick Bennett: Aged 27. Schoolmaster signed last year from fellow Southern Leaguers Bognor. Teams up well with Robson and scored in each of his last three league matches.

Robin Sykes: Aged 28. Local schoolmaster, formerly with Skelmersdale. Joined club two years ago.

Malcolm Wilks: Youngest member of the squad at 19, a fast and promising winger.

The defence is led by centre half Alan Avery, one of four members of the side who were with Waterlooville when they won promotion to the Southern League Premier Division at the first attempt in 1971.

Until then, Waterlooville were an amateur Hampshire League club. But in that year they turned professional and managed by Pat Wright, Portsmouth's former coach, became Pompey's nursery side. They were relegated the following season and when the Southern League banned nursery sides, Wright, now coaching in Saudi Arabia, left the managership and concentrated full time on his Portsmouth job.

Wright was succeeded by Jim Storrie, the former Leeds United forward, who also had a spell with Pompey. Under him the club always finished around the top of the table, missing out on promotion two seasons ago by a single point. This year David Munks, the former Sheffield United and Bournemouth defender, whose playing career was cut short by injury, took over.

SAME SQUAD

He has kept the same squad but introduced two new players, one of them the experienced Brian Bromley. At 30, Bromley has played in all four divisions of the Football League and started his career with First Division Bolton. The other new player is a local lad Ken Finlay.

I recently spoke to two players who know a good deal about Waterlooville — Gary Hand and Derek Gamblin who both came up to play in Monday's Testimonial. Both rated the Southern League side as a danger to the Blues but Gary felt that if Wycombe produce their best form they should get through. Derek thinks it could take a replay.

Assistant manager John Reardon watched Waterlooville win 2-0 at Andover last Saturday and is fairly optimistic, although he said that centre forward Robson will need special attention.

GOOD KNOWLEDGE

Ted Powell, the Blues manager, travelled down to watch Waterlooville on Wednesday against Trowbridge. Ted has a good knowledge of the club as he was in charge of Sutton last season when they met Waterlooville in the fourth qualifying round. They drew 1-1 at Sutton but lost the replay at home 3-1.

The manager has only one doubt for tomorrow. Midfield player John Priestley is still troubled by his calf injury and received treatment this week. Should Priestley miss the game, Ted will attempt to acquire the services of Gavin Fraser from Borough Road College. Two players are cup tied, Howard Kettleborough and Peter Cruse.

Ted thinks Waterlooville will be a tough nut to crack and that Wycombe will have to be at their best. "If we play as well as we have in recent games we can get through and don't forget that we still have seven players in the side that held Middlesbrough."

Wycombe followers travelling by car should take the A3 from London through Waterlooville and into Petersfield. Continue down dual carriageway to Horn-dean village. Turn right at Ship and Bell pub and continue through traffic lights towards Portsmouth. At main junction turn right to Denmead and take second right down Aysgarth Road. Take next turning right and the ground is on the right hand side.



Waterlooville dangerman John Robson who scored a hat-trick in the last round of the F.A. Cup against Hendon.